

POWER AND SECURITY

THE ROLE OF PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANIES IN SMALL STATES

Research question

Through the case-studies of the fourteenth century mercenary White Company, and the South African private military company Executive Outcomes, I will investigate the impact of hiring mercenaries on the international relations of small states.

Hypothesis

In a polarised international system where the power and influence of states are measured by their size and economic and military capabilities, many small states are isolated, ignored, or abused by more powerful nations and aggressive domestic actors. Private military companies are 'force-multipliers' and can be used both as a deterrent and an applied force to enhance the power of the state and enable them to protect their sovereignty from foreign interference and domestic opponents. My research will investigate the impact of the White Company in the fourteenth century and Executive Outcomes in the twentieth century, on the security and relative power of the small 'state', in this case Pisa, Angola and Sierra Leone.

Definitions

- Mercenaries** are (1) combatants actively taking part in a conflict (2) in a country of which they are not a national at the time (3) in exchange for payment.
- Private Military Companies (PMC)** are (1) a permanent legitimate corporate entities that have (2) responsibilities to shareholders, (3) are tied to the hiring party by a legal contract, and (4) provide security and military services including fielding combat forces that actively participate in military offensives.
- Small States** are defined by (1) population: up to 20 million in a developed country and up to 35 million in a developing country, (2) by the size of their armed forces (Kapur 1997) and (3) by their shared intrinsic security weaknesses.

Methods

- A first part of this investigation will be an **interpretive history** of mercenaries and their role in international relations up to the twentieth century. This will mainly draw from published historical narratives.
- Through **elite interviews** targeting politicians, PMC representatives and academics, I will discuss the effectiveness and risks of hiring companies of mercenaries and private military companies to enhance the security and power of small states.
- I will then apply my hypothesis to two **case-studies**, Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone and Angola in the 1990s, and the White Company in fourteenth century Italy to examine whether and how the international relations of the small state was affected by outsourcing military

Two Cases-Studies

White Company



Expected Results

Private military companies may affect the international relations of small states by:

- Acting as a force-multiplier.
- Providing effective military services.
- Giving access to military technology.
- Increasing the efficiency of the armed forces.
- Affecting the system of alliances.
- Creating alternatives to the systems of war that use child soldiers.
- Emphasizing the legitimacy of a government.
- Defending the sovereign government from rebels and foreign influences.
- Liberating state funds for development objectives.

Private military companies affect the balance of power and the international relations of small states in the international system but can be a dangerous enterprise in an unregulated environment.

Executive Outcomes

